




FARMINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

POLICY AND PROCEDURE

	Policy Number: 354-01	Effective Date: 01/10/2017	
	Subject: Public Information		
	Approved by:  Steven D. Hebbe, Chief of Police		

PURPOSE:

To establish guidelines concerning the release of information to the news media.

POLICY:

It is the policy of the Farmington Police Department to keep the public as reasonably well informed as possible through timely and accurate dissemination of information to the news media.

PROCEDURE:

The release of information to the media is accomplished in different ways depending on the news released, the day of the week, and the time of day. Routine news matters are released by the Records Division through the release of computer summaries or copies of Offense, Arrest, and Accident reports. These copies and summaries are available upon request from the Records Division, through the submission of an IPRA (Inspect Public Records Act) request.

Should members of the media have additional questions concerning the information provided, they are encouraged to contact the Public Information Officer (PIO).

Public Information Officer:

The PIO is responsible for the following functions:

1. Assisting news personnel in covering routine news stories and news coverage at scenes when necessary;
2. Availability for on-call responses to the news media. The PIO is generally available during normal business hours at the Police Department and is available after hours through the Communication Center or by cell phone;
3. Preparing and distributing news releases;
4. Arranging for and assisting at news conferences;
5. Coordinating and authorizing the release of information about victims, witnesses, and suspects;
6. Assisting in crisis situations within the agency;

7. Coordinating and authorizing the release of information concerning confidential agency investigations and operations;
8. Coordinating procedures for releasing information when other public service agencies are involved in a mutual effort.

In the event that the PIO is unavailable, a Department supervisor is designated as having the PIO duties.

Communications with the Public Information Officer:

Supervisors should communicate all newsworthy events to the PIO as soon as practical. The PIO makes the decision as to how to release the information. The PIO is on-call 24 hours a day and is available to respond to the scene of all major incidents as needed. Incidents for which the PIO should be notified as soon as possible include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Homicides;
2. Natural and man-made disasters;
3. Incidents of a serious nature involving Department personnel, including but not limited to shootings and serious accidents or injuries;
4. Incidents involving dignitaries;
5. SWAT call-outs;
6. High-profile incidents.

News Releases:

News releases are issued in response to specific, non-routine events rather than on a regular basis. The information given is brief, factual, non-biased and only pertains to the specific event of interest. News releases are produced in a timely manner and are made equally available to all news media personnel who request such notification. The common manner for issuing written releases is through the use of a group e-mail to designated media representatives. It is the responsibility of news media agencies to provide current or updated contact information for use in receiving News Releases from the Department. When media releases are made by someone other than the PIO, a copy is forwarded to the PIO as soon as possible.

Policy Revisions:

Members of the media are advised when the contents of this policy are significantly changed or altered in any way. At least annually, the PIO distributes policies related to the Public Information function to the Media representatives via e-mail. Media representatives are encouraged to provide feedback on the content of the policies.

On-Scene Release of Information:

At the scene of an incident, initial news media contacts are handled by the highest ranking supervisor at the scene. When necessary, and should the incident require, supervisors should request that the PIO respond to handle contacts with the media.

On-Scene Access:

Supervisors are responsible for controlling the access of news media representatives, including photographers, to the scene of major fires, natural disasters, other catastrophic events, and the perimeter of crime scenes. Whenever possible, an area should be designated to accommodate the media in their efforts to gather information. Media representatives will remain outside the scene perimeter unless lead into the scene by the PIO or their representative, if the situation allows. If an occasion arises in which a media representative jeopardizes or otherwise hinders an investigation, notification is made up the chain of command to the Chief of Police documenting the incident. Media personnel should be immediately removed from the scene if the situation requires such action.

Released Information:

Information which is not confidential or which would not hamper an investigation or jeopardize anyone's rights may be released to the media. Such information includes:

1. Facts of an incident, such as the date and time of occurrence, location, the nature of the incident, and the basic circumstances of the incident. Caution should be taken not to release information vital to the case investigation;
2. The name of persons arrested by members of the Farmington Police Department;
3. The arrestee's physical description, age, and city of residence. Under circumstances where more specific information is required, such as to prevent undue confusion with names of common occurrence, the media may request the arrestee's complete date of birth;
4. Date and time of arrest;
5. Location of arrest;
6. Date, time and location of booking;
7. A synopsis of the factual circumstances surrounding the arrest;
8. Amount of bail;
9. Time and manner of release or location where the arrestee is being held;
10. All charges the subject is being held on, including warrants and parole or probation holds;
11. Identification of any suspect(s) for whom a warrant has been issued.

Release Restrictions:

Since no significant law enforcement or public interest would be served, the following information is not normally released by employees of the Department:

1. Opinions about a defendant's character, guilt or innocence;
2. Admissions, confessions, or the contents of a statement or alibi attributable to the defendant;
3. References to the result of any investigative procedure such as fingerprints, polygraph examinations, ballistic tests, or laboratory examinations;
4. Statements concerning the credibility or anticipated testimony of prospective witnesses;
5. Opinions concerning evidence or arguments of the case, whether or not it is anticipated that such evidence or argument will be presented at trial;
6. Identity of a child victim who has been neglected or abused, or Family In Need of Services;
7. The refusal or failure of the accused to submit to any test or examination, with the exception of chemical tests relating to persons arrested for D.W.I.;
8. The identity, testimony, or credibility of a prospective witness;
9. Supposition about the motive in a crime;
10. The name of a victim of a sex crime.

Inter-agency Cooperation:

When the Department is involved in a mutual effort with other agencies, it will be the responsibility of the agency with the primary jurisdiction to release information and coordinate with the media.